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## **United States and Russian Federation Cooperate on Return of Russian-origin Research Reactor Fuel to Russia**

**MOSCOW, RUSSIA** - On May 27, 2004, the U.S. Secretary of Energy Spencer Abraham and Director Romyantsev of the Russian Federal Agency for Atomic Energy signed a bilateral agreement between the U.S. and Russian Federation governments concerning the repatriation of Russian-origin high-enriched uranium (HEU) research reactor fuel to Russia. Under this agreement, more than a dozen countries are eligible to receive financial and technical assistance from the United States and others to ship their fresh and spent research reactor fuel to Russia for safe and secure management. This agreement reaffirms the United States and Russian Federation's shared commitment to reduce global stockpiles of weapons-usable nuclear materials, to reduce the threat of international terrorism, and to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

"With today's agreement, we are moving forward to complete the important work of repatriating fresh and spent HEU fuel, which will reduce the threat of terrorism and prevent the proliferation of weapons-grade uranium," Secretary Abraham stated.

Abraham also said that this program supports President George W. Bush's goal of ending the use of weapons-grade uranium in research reactors and we are pleased to partner with the Russian Federation and the International Atomic Energy Agency on this vital effort.

Beginning in December 1999, representatives from the United States and the Russian Federation, in cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), began developing a new program to support the return to the Russian Federation of Soviet or Russian supplied fresh and irradiated HEU fuel, currently stored at foreign research reactors. Through these tripartite discussions, more than 20 research reactors in 17 countries have been identified as having Russian/Soviet-supplied fuel. As an integral part of this Russian Research Reactor Fuel Return (RRRFR) program, participating countries agree to convert their research reactors from using HEU to low-enriched uranium (LEU) fuel upon availability, qualification, and licensing of suitable LEU fuel.

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In September 2003, under the RRRFR program, Russia accepted approximately 14 kilograms of fresh Russian-origin HEU from Romania. The HEU was airlifted from Bucharest, Romania to Russia where it will be down-blended and used for nuclear power plant fuel fabrication. In December 2003, also under the RRRFR program, Russia accepted approximately 17 kilograms of fresh Russian-origin HEU from Bulgaria. Most recently, in March 2004, under the RRRFR program, Russia accepted 17 kilograms of fresh Russian-origin HEU from Libya. In addition, preparations are well advanced for the first shipment to Russia of irradiated fuel containing HEU from a research reactor in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

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